

Barry Corbet Lookout Mountain December 7, 1994

Sitting in Barry's Kitchen at a round table. Barry sits in a wheelchair, lifting up his body periodically as if to stretch or relieve strain from sitting in the chair. Barry is lean, handsome. His hair is brown and scraggly. He has an impish grin.

Tape One, Side A:

We discuss our interviews, complications with tape recorders. I tell him that once, the tape from a three hour interview was stolen out of my backpack.

Jean: What do you do now? Do you write? Is that your main thing?

Barry: Well, I am the editor, of that. [we discuss the magazine New Mobility, for disabled people]

Jean: Oh. You are the editor.

Barry: Its a full time job for me.

Jean: That's wonderful. And so, did you create it?

Barry: No. No. Its got none of my money behind it. I've been part of it from the beginning. Writing for it. But then it went broke about a year and a half ago, and we were purchased by a California company and we moved out to California. And I got demoted to editor-at-large because I wouldn't move to California. They brought me back up in the most recent issues.

Jean: Because they realized they needed you more than you needed them? Well, this is very interesting.

Barry: And I wanted them. This is a nice job.

Jean: Had you written before?

Barry: Well, I made films all of my life. And I'd written those films, a

couple hundred films. I have a couple books on disability subjects. Yeah, its not new to me. I had no formal training.

Jean: But you had been doing it for years and years. That's what I thought. I thought you were involved in film.

Barry: Just about three weeks ago, I moved all the film equipment out of this room. Packed floor to ceiling.

Jean: And with fed ex and faxes you can be the editor from here. That's great. Its a great place.

Barry: Mmmn hmmnn. The alternative is to move to Malibou. One could do worse. They were in Culver City.

Jean: [laugh] Well, I wanted to start out just by asking you about your own, um, experience getting into mountaineering and climbing, and I thought then we could segueway into ...

Barry: Well, I started when I was 12, but I had an interest before that. I was reading mountaineering books by the time I was nine or ten, because my father had done some climbing. We've got some deer down here. [he points out the window at three deer grazing below on the steep hillside] My father climbed the Matterhorn and Mount Blanc in 1921, so he had that interest. It was all guided climbing. He didn't ever learn much about it. And, then I ran into a scout master who knew nothing about climbing but sure as hell was going to do it. And uh, so I went with some other gullible boy scouts. We did lots of trips. I mean, one or two week trips. So we did climb up in the mountain ranges of British Columbia which is where I grew up.

Jean: Vancouver?

Barry: Vancouver was the town, and we went up to the Giribaldi range, which you now think of as Whistler, probably.

Jean: Right. I've been skiing up at Whistler. So you grew up in ... I love that area. What a wild area.

Barry: I was tired of rain. I wanted to leave. I couldn't wait to shake the mud of Vancouver off my feet.

Jean: So, you started doing some climbs up there.

Barry: Mmn hmmn. And just whenever I could from then on, I sought out people who knew something about climbing, and there were damn few of those in my life. And when I got to Dartmouth, there were a few people, still not a tremendous amount of expertise but a lot of interest. And I joined the mountaineering club and became president in my short tenure there. I kept leaving Dartmouth. Like several other guides.

Jean: You did? What is the time frame here?

Barry: Uh, 1954 is when I arrived. I would have graduated in 58, and as I say I took sebaticals and I never did graduate.

Jean: Oh. You never did graduate.

Barry: No. I finally gave it up for film. And ski instructing at Suicide Six in Woodstock, Vermont.

Jean: That's interesting, because um, this is jumping way ahead, but you know, a lot of people say that Glenn, it was really important for Glenn that people had a college degree.

Barry: Mmmn mmmn. Not so. But I'm trying to think of who else didn't.

Jean: But see, Yvon never guided for him. You'll have to tell my your version of when you and Yvon portered.

Barry: Yeah, okay.

Jean: And then you went on to become a guide. So you were at Dartmouth, and you sort of got in with this whole group of climbers. Was Bill Briggs there?

Barry: Briggs was on the road at the time. I met him while I was at Dartmouth, because he came by. And later I travelled with Briggs. We went to Yosemite together, and to the Tetons together.

Jean: Did he bring you to the Tetons?

Barry: No, I went there, I had an interest that started in high school in the Tetons. There was a spread in the Geographic about the Tetons, and I knew I wanted to go there. It was like certain knowledge that that was where I wanted to live.

Jean: From high school on? Did you have to go in high school.

Barry: Yes. I went in the two weeks preceding going to Dartmouth, so in 1954 was when I first got there. And then I went every summer thereafter for a long long time. And then I found ways to work there. Some summers I had to work in Yellowstone and then went down there to climb.

Jean: I did that too, yeah. I was the same way. I was drawn to the area. I kept coming back. So, you ended up not finishing up at Dartmouth. Were you, lets see. Was Jack Durrance at all ...

Barry: He was not at all in evidence. I have a Jack Durrance story. I met him a couple of times. I worked with his brother a lot. And I know his children. But I don't have much contact with Jack.

Jean: So, he really wasn't a presence at the time when you were climbing.

Barry: Nope. Only by legend. I mean, he was the uh, far and away the most romantic of the early climbers.

Jean: And why was that?

Barry: Oh, because he was such a rake and a womanizer and a drinker and a smoker and we all admired that. [we laugh] We thought it proved that we could do it too.

Jean: Right. And then you all set that precedence. So when you started in the Tetons, climbing, you would come out every summer? Why don't you tell me how that ...

Barry: I started coming back and finding ways to work in the country, and then I took a year off at Dartmouth and went away to Mexico and worked in the mine. That was in the winter time and I came back in time for summer. And that was the year I started guiding.

Jean: And how did you get your job?

Barry: It was very much part time. I just knew other people who were there, who were ... Dingman was just starting at the time and I knew him from Dartmouth. Dave Dingman. And Dick Pownall. And Willie, were both very helpful, because I got to know them early on. And I think Glenn relied on their recommendations very highly.

Jean: Do you remember when you portered?

Barry: Oh sure.

Jean: Why don't you tell me what you remember about that?

Barry: Well, you know what it was. It was Howie Friedman filming the North Face of the Grand. And there were a lot of, at the time, luminary people. Herbie Jancon,[sounded out] and people most people don't remember now. And I think it was our job to ferry there camp from Surprise Lake up Teton Glacier to the Upper Saddle. Is that right? Yeah, we took it to the upper saddle.

Jean: I thought you took it to the enclosure.

Barry: Well, that is the Upper Saddle. I think they are 40 feet apart. And we put up the camp there. And it was a long arduous drag, I remember that. But the other thing I remember is we blew up their air mattresses and that was so appreciated by Klaus for one, that he gave me a purlon rope. I think I was the first person in the valley with a purlon rope. Because we had never seen one before.

Jean: Yvon said you carried your load all at once. He had two loads, but you did one load.

Barry: I don't remember that.

Jean: You don't remember that? Was that your introduction to Glenn?

Barry: No. I don't think so. I don't think so. But I'm not sure when I first met Glenn. I don't remember a time when I first met him. Actually, I do, now that I think of it. It was in a social situation. It was a campfire folk sing.

Jean: So he was sitting around doing his musical ...

Barry: Oh, he undoubtedly pretended to yodel.

Jean: [laughing] I thought that was Briggs.

Barry: Well, no, Briggs actually could yodel. That was the difference.

Jean: Well, that's a clear distinction. And so you met him up on the hill? On Guide's Hill?

Barry: No. It was somewhere else in the valley. Like it might have been Triangle X or something like that.

Jean: One of the dude ranches. So, why did you decide to start guiding?

Barry: Oh, that was an easy decision. I would have killed for the opportunity.

Jean: Really.

Barry: Because the people I most admired were doing it.

Jean: And you most admired them as climbers?

Barry: Sure. They were the heralds of my youth.

Jean: And this is Willie, and ... or who were you thinking of?

Barry: Sure. that would be Dick Pownall and Willie and Bill Byrd probably.

Jean: Oh, I spent hours with Bill Byrd.

Barry: He's a good talker, isn't he?

Jean: He's wonderful. Yeah, yeah, he's a really good talker. So how did you know about these people? How, as a young climber, how did you ...

Barry: Oh, it was the process of osmosis. Because Jenny Lake in those days was so different. You just pulled into the Jenny Lake camp ground, you could stay for the summer. The climbers all hung out at the ranger station there. The climbers all knew about each other.

Jean: So, through word of mouth, they had become legends for your. People who you admired.

Barry: Sure. I think Ortenberger's first edition of his guide book came out about then, so we started to know who had done things. Actually, it hadn't come out yet then.

Jean: That was really the first time you could trace who had done different climbs.

Barry: Of course, climbing is subject to a tremendous amount of folklore and legend and misinformation.

Jean: Right. I know. That's what makes it interesting and also kind of scary.

Barry: Especially for you. I'll bet.

Jean: But, was it something that was sort of an honor to be able to do?

Barry: Oh yeah. I mean, I did ... I feel about that the way I feel about being editor of the magazine now. Its just the pinnacle of where I want to be right now.

Jean: So what do you remember about guiding then? What made it such a good experience for you?

Barry: Oh, I think its, uh, has something to do with the fairly immature kid who lacks confidence, who suddenly is in a position where people have

to behave as if you are God. People who uh, suddenly realize that they are out of their depth. And that they need your expertise. And for some reason, there is something about guiding, too, its a job you grow into quickly, or you don't do it at all. And if you can inspire confidence in people, even confidence you don't share yourself, then that's a self-authenticating experience.

Jean: So did it take your actual climbing experience into a different realm?

Barry: Very much so. It was much more dangerous than guiding.

Jean: You thought what was much more dangerous than guiding.

Barry: Or rather, excuse me. Guiding was much more dangerous than climbing.

Jean: I thought you were going to do a flip on me there.

Barry: You are climbing with inexperienced people, and you are going up in any weather. Virtually any weather.

Jean: See, because what's interesting to me, is how the Exum guides, or what the Exum guides did for mountaineering as a sport, and also professionalizing it. And you were among the group of people, I think, who were part of that professionalizing the sport.

Barry: Well, no one could have been less professional than pretty much all of the Exum guides were, especially in the early years. If you take Glenn and Paul Petzoldt in particular, they were just like us. They were kids who had a sense of adventure and they had very little knowledge of mountaineering.

Jean: But Petzoldt did, didn't he? Much more than Glenn.

Barry: Much more than Glenn, its true. Uh, his breadth of experience was greater. But he was never a technologically advanced climber. Technically, I should say.

Jean: I know that Glenn never aggressively pursued the technological advancement either.

Barry: No. He never wanted to. He certainly had the talent for it, but he didn't want to.

Jean: And within the guide school, I know that later that became an issue. But just, you know, with some of the guides.

Barry: I think it did.

Jean: At the time, so you are saying that at the time, you weren't concerned about guiding as a profession. It was more a great opportunity to follow in the footsteps of some of the people you admire.

Barry: Yes. I think so. But keep in mind that the other half of my life was teaching skiing. So the two of them fit together, and it left two seasons of the year to go off and do what I wanted to do, which was climb.

Jean: So it really enabled you the freedom. So did being an Exum guide open up climbing opportunities for you internationally?

Barry: It did. It did. What opened up international opportunities for me was the fact that I'd climbed with Emerson, who was with the Park Service at the time, and with Pownall and Unsoeld, all of whom, but Dick, had Himalayan experience. And uh, uh Dick Pownall.

Jean: Right. Oh, no, I was thinking Emerson. Okay.

Barry: Emerson and Unsoeld had Himalayan experience. Pownall did not. But he had been around enough, he had a great reputation. So, when [inaudible - obviously the trip leader] first started looking for people to invite on his first Everest trip, he started asking those people, and I came through on their recommendation.

Jean: So what are some of the major climbs that you did, then?

Barry: Well, the first thing that brought me to that, to the attention of anyone there was probably, and this had something to do with why I was

guiding, was that Jake Breitenbach and two others and I had done a new route on McKinley. The same summer.

Jean: Okay. Is that the one Sinclair wrote about in his book.

Barry: And Pete's got a part of your story, too, I would think.

Jean: Absolutely. He was part of my Northwest tour. So you had done that, and so you were kind of known a little bit. So you started guiding.

Barry: Yeah. And I had done a few climbs in the Tetons that attracted attention.

Jean: And which ones were those?

Barry: Well, depending on how early you want to go back. Jake and I did the North Face of the Grand, and we did it in six hours, and that really surprised people.

Jean: I bet. That was probably the first time that anyone had ever done anything like that.

Barry: Oh. By far. Now people of course walk up in much better times. And there were later climbs that sort of built our reputation.

Jean: And these preceded your guiding.

Barry: Not all of them did. Some of them came later. And my memory really isn't good enough to sort that all out.

Jean: I can sort that out later. What's interesting to me, is that when you mention the people who sort of drew you into the guide school and the people you looked up to, you are not mentioning Glenn. And, so I'm curious about the presence that he had for you.

Barry: Alright. Its quite true, Glenn was not the climber that I looked up to. He wasn't the climber that any of those other people guiding there were. I didn't find out about Glenn until I went to work for him. I mean, find out what a supportive person he was. That's my first take on Glenn,

is that when he introduced you to a beginners climbing class in the morning, they went away with your thinking that you must be the best mountaineer in the country. He was always bragging on his guides, and not doing it in a self-aggrandizing way, but in a way that made those guides look good.

Jean: So did you feel like that actually enhanced your own guiding? I mean, did it actually serve a functional purpose?

Barry: Well, there is always a functional purpose in working for somebody that you like. And uh, the money seemed amazingly good for uh, I mean you could just take four turkeys up to the top of the Grand, and then you could buy a new pair of climbing boots. You know, that was the trade-off.

Jean: And so, you were well paid at that point. And other guides in other places didn't get paid so well?

Barry: Well, there weren't too many places where guides were making any money at all in the country at that time. Unlike now.

Jean: Right. I'll have to compare it with Rainier and with the other places, and see how that compared. But Exum paid well?

Barry: Yeah. You could make 45 to 60 bucks for taking people up the Grand. That seemed like a lot of money then, for two days work.

Jean: How, when did you guide there?

Barry: I started in 59 I 'spose, which would be the year that we did McKinley. The end of 59. And that's also the year that I moved to Jackson, having dropped out of Dartmouth for the final time. Moved to Jackson. Taught skiing there. And uh, I guided for Glenn every summer full time for, well, until the Everest expedition. Well, even that ... that didn't cut into guiding. I'm trying to think if there were any expeditions that took time away from guiding, but there really weren't. So I was there every year for at least ten years, until I started working full time as a film maker. And then I started guiding when I was in town and when Glenn needed me.

Jean: So you started about the time that Al started.

Barry: Yeah. A little before, but not much before.

Jean: A little before?

Barry: Yeah. Think so. I was questioning whether I started in 58 or 59. When did Al say he started?

Jean: I thought he started in 58, but I could be wrong. See, I know that Dean, and well, Rod and Peter started a little later than Al. So, and they started like 61, so I know that Al started in the late 50s.

Barry: Interesting. I just remembered the summer that Hemming and I shared a tent, and uh, Al was very much around that summer, but he wasn't guiding that year. It might have been 58. I might have started just toward the end of the year in 58 and come back full time after the, uh, after the uh McKinley thing.

Jean: And then you, while you were guiding with Exum, went over to Asia and did lots of climbing over there.

Barry: Well, not a lot. There was the Everest climb which people paid attention to.

Jean: When was that?

Barry: Sixty-three. And then uh, Antarctica in 56-slash 7. And then, uh, I'm sure you've run into this before. The climbs no one can talk about? [laughter]

Jean: Were you on that too?

Barry: I was one of those. [much laughter]

Jean: That's really the interesting story.

Barry: Well, it is.

Jean: Jack Turner was on that, wasn't he?

Barry: Not when I was.

Jean: Oh. But I know that Al was. Well. Silence. How did you, how did you um, [telephone rings - Barry talks on phone. While I won't transcribe this, his conversation with a friend provides a sample of Barry's cheerful, clever personality.]

Barry: That was my recent ex-employer. I worked for a hospital as a writer during the year the magazine was shut down.

Jean: Did you do promotion for them? Or, as a writer?

Barry: No, I worked in the research department.

Jean: Oh, interesting. This looks really good. Very interesting topic. [referring to New Mobility, the magazine he is currently editor of]

Barry: Its not a bad magazine, at least its a lot better than anything in the field.

Jean: Oh, I bet it really [inaudible] Good cover pose, too. Lets see, I was going to ask you about ... oh, I didn't turn off my tape while you were on the phone. You didn't say anything bad. Um, see, I'm curious about what you think this generation of guides accomplished for the sport.

Barry: I'm not certain. I think Yvon has a much sharper sense of history than I do. And its true that the professionalism did evolve. Its true that safety, competence, started existing. It didn't early on. You know that Glenn went for, Glenn and Paul went for years and years with no accidents.

Jean: Yes. I know.

Barry: And, uh, you have to chalk that up to some good judgement, but some of it is good luck, too. And, um, finally we realized that accidents were going to happen, and we'd better minimize them. So, I think we just learned how to do it better. So in that sense it was professionalism. The uh, you think of the people who have stuck with the guiding, they are not in general the cutting edge climbers, although there have been a few of the

younger ones who have been brought in. There are people like Al who are very prominent in the climbing and trekking field, but what its done historically for climbing, I'm not sure. I may have stopped paying attention when I stopped climbing. I switched lives back there.

Jean: Well, you know, climbing today has become such a popular sport. I mean, millions of people do it. But then, there were few people who did it.

Barry: It was a pretty weird thing to do.

Jean: It was a weird thing to do. I mean, how did people regard you? What do you recall?

Barry: Oh, I think with nothing but stars in their eyes. I think to be a guide and a ski instructor in Jackson Hole in the sixties was a very cool ... social position to be in.

Jean: You were forging, you were the first season, the creme of the seasonal. So, you didn't have people looking at you with disdain, or ...

Barry: No. I think people tended to admire it, because they didn't understand it, even if they had no interest in climbing. And that they thought it was crazy, it was one thing, but then there was also sort of a skewed admiration, like that some people hand out to football players, which is a pretty crazy thing to do, too.

Jean: Well, I don't, but theoretically, I can see what you are saying. So you were romanticized. You were, that generation ...

Barry: Well, certainly in my own mind! [laughter] I think most of the guides found it a romantic occupation.

Jean: Interesting. So they were aware of it at the time. You were having fun doing what you would do anyway and getting paid to do it.

Barry: And of course there was drudgery and there were terrible clients at times. And I suspect that's probably gotten worse as climbing is popularized. The people who wanted to climb in the early days were goofs like us. There were similarities.

Jean: So, you didn't feel like you were that much different from ...

Barry: No, and they tended to be highly educated, professional people for some reason, which is no longer the case. Or less the case.

Jean: That still happens, but not as prevalent. So do you remember any funny experiences or bad experiences guiding?

Barry: Oh sure. I mean they are all sort of silly. I'll tell you, however, my second trip up the Guide, up the Grand, guiding with Pownall. Glenn wouldn't, he wouldn't let me do it alone until the next year.

Jean: How old were you when you started guiding?

Barry: I was twenty. Twenty. I know the Park wouldn't hire me because I wasn't old enough. [we giggle] And uh, you know there had been a death on the Exum Ridge, a private party the day before. And we knew about it, but we were ahead of the rescue party, so we knew that we were going to encounter a body at the base of the friction pitch. And we didn't tell the clients about it, and by the time we got up there it was quite clear that we were going to have to tell the clients, because there he was. And uh, so we did, and that's fine. Everybody took that fine. And we went on up to where the, uh, Exum Ridge, its actually the top of the Owen Rappel, its close to the top of the Owen Rappel, and Pownall saw it, he could look down into the Owen Gulch, leading up to the bottom of the rappel, and he could see the rest of the party coming, so he was going to go over and tell them where the body was. And he put all eight people roped to me, and said take them over to the Owen Route and go up that way. And I says, 'Sure, Jack.' But, I'd never been up the Owen Route. I'd been down it once, and I had no idea how to recognize it from below. And uh, pretty soon we were doing some fairly hard climbing, and I realized eventually, I mean it took me a year actually to find out where we really had been, was in the Great West Chimney. Which is Durrance's hardest climb. With all these people roped about 15 feet apart.

Jean: Oh my god. Well, how did you get up it?

Barry: Well, we just traversed back out and eventually Dick showed up, sort of looking down, "What?" Wondering about it, but he was wonderfully

calm about it. I'm sure he never told Glenn. This will be the first time Glenn's ever heard of it, but he'll appreciate it now.

[we discuss Byrd or Glenn's story about taking people up the wrong mountain the first time they guided. Then we discuss Unsoeld's notoriously bad route finding, and how difficult its been for me to contact Jolene Unsoeld.]

Jean: So, you actually took them up the wrong route, or had to traverse out of it?

Barry: Well, we went partly up the wrong route, and then Dick showed us the right way and it was fine. Nobody was ever the wiser I think, but it did take a little extra time. It did give Dick, some anxious moments, I'm sure, wondering where the entire party had disappeared to, when he suddenly realized there were eight people with a novice guide.

Jean: So where did you live? Did you live on Guide's Hill?

Barry: Uh huh.

Jean: And what was that like?

Barry: Oh, it was terrific. It was uh, it was like growing up. It was like being parented by sane people. You'd come home in the evening, and you'd have people like Rob Day and Unsoeld, Byrd and Pownall and Ortenberger sometimes, and just good people hanging around.

Jean: There was a network of people who, they were older who sort of mentored you?

Barry: Mm hmm. Very much so. Very much so. That included the rangers, too. Emerson, and Al Williamson, who is another climbing ranger.

Jean: So, the community was really tight knit. It became a learning environment for you?

Barry: Mm hmm. The people who were serious about climbing stuck together and learned together. And what, there was a lot of mentoring.

Jean: So, looking back, when you look back on those decades, or years that you were there, do you ... Well, I guess you were saying that you don't really pay much attention to it now, but do you notice that there, that that group of people formed an ethos for the generations to come? I mean, I'm sure it wasn't happening consciously [fax line rings] Do you need to get that?

Barry: Yeah, that's a fax.

Jean: Um. Just, sort of in retrospect, do you notice anything that that generation contributed ... [different sounding fax ring]

Barry: Wait a minute. It shouldn't be able to do that. I'm gonna let it happen, or not let it happen as the case may be. I found out about a few weeks ago that the phone company was handing out my fax number as my voice number. And that is undoubtedly somebody who has that number.

Jean: Why would they do that, I wonder?

Barry: I changed the billing. I changed the billing of one of the numbers to the company in California. Somehow, that did it. [now the voice telephone rings]

Jean: There you go. [Barry talks on the phone, reschedules the call] So anyway, you don't, we were discussing if you think that perhaps — what that generation of climbers may have contributed or how they might differ from some of the climbers that you see now.

Barry: I don't see climbers anymore. I see the old climbers, but I don't see the new ones. And I don't keep up with the literature.

Jean: So that doesn't interest you at all.

Barry: I'm interested in a very superficial way. I'm more interested in the old climbers that I knew and continue to know, and that's really it.

Jean: What type of person became a guide or a climber. What about this group of people interested you?

Barry: There were extroverts and introverts. I'm trying to think of any common denominator. Education was usually one. They were in general well educated.

Jean: Or intellect, if not education.

Barry: Yeah. Formerly or otherwise. I can't think of any common denominators.

Jean: Were they people who questioned more? Or ... who were more philosophical?

Barry: It varied a lot. Rob Day for example just had a real warmth for other humans, and he liked to be able to shepherd people, he liked that. Byrd and Unsoeld were the storytellers, and that's what they liked.

Jean: So, Unsoeld was a storyteller like Byrd?

Barry: Oh yeah. I mean, he's Byrd cubed. I think that much of Bill's style comes from Willy. He would probably resent that statement.

Jean: I had heard so much about Unsoeld, and really hadn't heard that much about Byrd, so when I met Byrd, I really, really enjoyed him. I mean, I had a great day with him.

Barry: I sure liked him.

Jean: I was very comfortable.

Barry: Do you know Joanne up in Jackson?

Jean: Yes. I've interviewed Joanne, too. Joanne actually wrote me a letter of recommendation for the Wyoming Council of Humanities fellowship. She and I worked together when I was a journalist. I really supported the historical center. So Joanne was involved in that group of people, too. And you were married. To ...

Barry: On and off. [we laugh]

Jean: Okay. Following in Jack Durrance's footsteps. Was it a pretty wild time up on the hill. I mean, Al always, people tell me different things. Like, Jeff Foote and Al tell me it was really wild. And Glenn and other people tell me that it was less so. And Yvon has his little stories.

Barry: Well, my take on it is that it was not very wild. We sat around, talked and sang folk songs.

Jean: That's pretty not wild.

Barry: Teton tea came in, and some of us learned how to like gin. As the sixties wore on, some of us learned how to like drugs. But there was very little drug taking going on on the hill.

Jean: For the sixties, it was very conservative.

Barry: Yeah. And uh, in 68 was where I had my accident, so that was my last exposure. And about then is uh, when drugs were first coming in to Jackson Hole in a big way.

Jean: And you were starting another guide school at the time.

Barry: I was. And that's something that in many ways drove a wedge between Glenn and me, although I never felt it. He felt it. And it was something that I set up just before my accident. I never did run the guide school, because I got the permission to run the school and then I had the accident and its been run by other people since then.

Jean: Because Pete Sinclair told me that you asked him.

Barry: He ran it. And then Jim Huidekuper ran it.

Jean: Yeah. I interviewed Virginia [Huidekuper]. Now, why did you decide to start your own guide school? Did you have differing philosophies, or was it, were you trying to set out to do something ...

Barry: No. I think it was ... I think it was that I just uh, ... Boy, I'm not sure that I know why now. I think the ski area was an opportunity to start something new. Outside of the Park. I knew that my credibility within the Park was good. And at the time, I'd told Glenn I wasn't gonna guide his

main route. I don't know what's happened in the years since then. I really wasn't ... I was intentionally trying to take turn that Glenn wasn't already on.

Jean: So that's why you were trying to do it. You didn't want to compete with him.

Barry: And there was going to be a school at the, uh ... Yeah, well I couldn't compete with him in the Park. The Park wouldn't have let me do that. They didn't want more than one concessionaire. But they might have, in fact they would allow me to guide other peaks.

Jean: Within the Park.

Barry: Yeah, within the Park. But that's.

Jean: They still do that. They focus more on other peaks and sort of a more long term climbing experience.

Barry: Yeah. I see their catalogues.

Jean: Is that why you were establishing it? You wanted to have a different type of ...

Barry: No. I think where its gone now is something way beyond what I was thinking at the time. I think I just thought it was a chance to get something started, to get a business of my own, I suppose.

Jean: So you were striking out in an entrepreneurial way, and Glenn maybe felt that was being disloyal. I can see that with the way he is. With his personality. But you weren't doing it because you were dissatisfied or critical of what he was doing.

Barry: No I didn't feel that way at all. Glenn did fire me once. I should tell you that.

Jean: He did?

Barry: Yeah.

Jean: Oh, well, the truth finally comes out.

Barry: I'm 58 years old and I've only been fired once.

Jean: Why did he fire you?

Barry: Because, I refused to guide on my birthday one year. You know how, my birthday's at the end of August, and all the guides are going crazy at the end of August. Its the busiest time and the weather, the thunderstorms are the worst then and its the most dangerous time. It just wears on you at the end of the summer. And for some reason ... I had already asked for my birthday off and something came up and you know usually you can be flexible but I said 'No, I'm not going to do it.' So he fired me. And uh, about three days later I went up there, and I couldn't find him so I left a letter for him and he called back as soon as he got the letter and said, "Come on back. Come on back." [laughter]

Jean: So did he fire you in anger, or did he fire you, was it ...

Barry: No. It was definitely in anger and I was putting him on the spot, because he had a party and no guide. He had his reasons.

Jean: Because I heard that the wrath of Glenn could be ... I mean Glenn was a very gracious person, but when he got mad at you, you wouldn't want ...

Barry: This was the only time I ever saw him get mad.

Jean: Knowing him the way that I know him, just in sort of a formal, best behavior kind of way, I can't see him doing that. So he just fired you. And then what did you say in your letter?

Barry: I told him my reasons, and probably told him, I mean I have no idea, but what I think I would have told him is that I wanted to continue working for him and lets work this out. And once that was said, there was not working out that remained to be done. [laughter]

Jean That's great. How far into your guiding were you at the time?

Barry: Uh, quite far. I think seven or eight years.

Jean: There was somebody else who got fired. I don't remember who it was. They went and worked for the other guide school, and then came back and worked for Glenn. It might have been Peter. It was Pete.

Barry: Peter Lev.

Jean: Yeah, it was Peter Lev. [laughter] Was he a father figure? Was Glenn a father figure? To you?

Barry: He wasn't to me but he was to some people, yeah.

Jean: You know its interesting, because I think you were more, I think you were very independent.

Barry: Well it might be the wrong word. I might have been just socially retarded.

Jean: [laughing] And why would you say that rather than independent?

Barry: Well, I mean why would independence make me think of, you know, identify Glenn as a father figure less?

Jean: Well, because I think a lot of the people felt, I mean just a lot of the people I've talked with really felt that Glenn was a father figure, an example, a mentor, in those ways. And Yvon is convinced that people who climb tend to not have had a good relationship with their father.

Barry: That's interesting. I had a lousy relationship with mine.

Jean: Oh you did? [we laugh]

Barry: Son of a bitch.

Jean: Its a common thread. So, that is one thing that he suggested as a common theme, and so he feels like Glenn sort of, you were all his boys. And he provided a steady anchor for people who tend to be mavericks.

Barry: He provided an anchor, yes, and we were mavericks in certain ways and Glenn was absolutely not a maverick by the standards of the sixties. By the standards of the forties, he was. But he, I mean any employer is a father in a sense, because you dole out the money.

Jean: But my sense is that he provided much more, than just what any employer would provide. And that is my sense from talking with people ...

Barry: I think you're right. He provided his guides with confidence, he uh, he was just so supportive. Those guys, probably that was very much appreciated.

Jean: And was that appreciated by you?

Barry: Very much so. I'd drop by, I used to commute between Jackson and Vancouver, because my family lived in Vancouver, and so I'd stop in Kellog, coming and going, usually.

Jean: Yeah, I used to drive from Seattle to Jackson, so I know that route.

Barry: And I'd stay with them, and at times Glenn got me gigs showing McKinley slides to highschool students, things like that. I saw Glenn conducting his band class once, which was fun. He was great. Oh, he was just a great, great music teacher.

Jean: And what was it?

Barry: He couldn't play anything well himself, I'm sure. I couldn't prove it, but I bet he played every instrument in the band, and not a one of them well. But he motivated kids. And, he did it without any sort of false enthusiasm. It was just a general enthusiasm. And he took his kids, they always went to the state band contest.

Jean: Yeah. They played at the world's fair.

Barry: I didn't remember that. No.

Jean: So, do you think he used those same qualities to motivate the guides?

Barry: Well, I suppose in retrospect you could convince me that he did. As far as comparing kids with kids.

Jean: What do you know about Beth?

Barry: Oh, I don't want to talk about Beth a whole lot.

Jean: Oh, you don't want to talk about Beth? Nobody wants to talk about Beth!

Barry: I don't want to be quoted on it.

Jean: Well, could we turn off the tape recorder? Or ...

Barry: Or you can just honor my ...

Jean: I would honor ...

Barry: I felt that she was relatively shallow. She too was mothering person. And in a nice way, you know, was trying to be nice. But, she was more manipulative.

Jean: This is kind of interesting, because sometimes when there is a man like Glenn, who doesn't like to necessarily ... I mean, he is very polite. And there might be, say the woman behind a man like Glenn, who is more able to have boundaries. Sometimes I wonder if she became a scapegoat to the thing Glenn did.

Barry: It could very well be. I mean, I know lots of other couples where one person is laid back and so mellow that he is very agreeable, but probably to a partner, there's, well, somebody needs to keep the marriage focused. I think you said it right. To put down some rules.

Jean: See, cause Beth actually, she fascinates me. Because I've had so many people sort of say, you know, not even really bad but a little bit of resentment, or they felt like she manipulates Glenn, or this or that. And I always feel like both partners are equally responsible in something like that, and I always wondered if she sort of ... became a little bit of a scapegoat.

Barry: Have you met her?

Jean: Uh huh. I know her a little - quite well, well not quite well, but I met her several times and I got to know her quite a bit better this summer because Glenn became ill and he had some health problems, and my boyfriend was his doctor, and so I got to know them in a completely different way, than just this person who is writing this book. And Beth and I became, I actually had a renewed respect for Beth. I mean, she and I hadn't known each other well, but I realized she was actually quite a strong woman, who I wondered, had sort of deferred to her husband all their lives. But I didn't know. But its just sort of interesting, because in my relationship with Michael it was the same way. he was the person who always said yes, and yet he set me up to be the scapegoat. So, I always wondered if that happened to Beth and Glenn.

Barry: I don't know. I don't know. I just feel that Glenn was a genuine and Beth was, really manipulative is still the best word. But there are some nice memories too. Here is one you can include. Muffy French, you know the connection, Bob French, my friend from Dartmouth started guiding from Guide's hill. His sister Muffy came to visit.

Jean: Oh, she was his sister. Who you married, right?

Barry: Who I married. Beth and Muffy were talking about who might be available on guide's hill, and Beth's answer was essentially, everybody except Barry. [laughter].

Jean: And that's immediately who she went to?

Barry: Of course.

Jean: Sounded like the most interesting person.

Barry: So, it that way I can credit Beth with the fact that I had two relatively happy marriages, and I still have a great relationship with Muffy.

Jean: Did she try to send the second woman away from you too? Or was

Muffy second.

Barry: There was a woman in-between, but when I say two marriage, Muffy and I were married twice. We were married and divorced twice.

Jean: That's extraordinary.

Barry: Well, we had to get married the second time.

Jean: [laughter] Okay.

Barry: You know, our second kid was twins.

Jean: You know, she worked on the Schuster campaign, and they were at one point considering me, they asked me to be their press assistant. And I didn't realize who she was until Jack Turner told me. Because, I'd heard her name. How many Muffys are there in the Wyoming area. Well that's really great that you are still friends. That's quite an accomplishment. Have you noticed any changes in guiding over the years? I mean, were you purposely trying to improve guiding?

Barry: I'd say no, but I think that we felt we were a lot better than other guide. That there was a need for certification just beginning toward the last guiding years that I had. In retrospect, I think that certification is not such a great idea.

Jean: This general certification that is still a controversy.

Barry: Well, I see it now as a consumer and a researcher in the health fields. I see the levels of certification driving up the cost of health care. I see certification now as a way of staking out your turf, not as a way of protecting the public. It can be both of course.

Jean: So, the motive behind certification isn't really the proper motive.

Barry: Well, ours was of course.

Jean: Of course. What were your motives at the time? [laughter]

Barry: No. We did feel that there was a lot of lousy guiding going on at

the time.

Jean: I'm sure there was a lot of lousy guiding. And so one of the thing about the Exum Guide school is that it brought credibility to the profession.

Barry: I remember we were extremely disappointed. There were two airliners that crashed at the Grand Canyon. And the airline, or not airline, but they were bringing in Swiss guides to recover the bodies. We thought we could do this nice job.

Jean: When was this?

Barry: Probably early sixties.

Jean: Well, that's quite the insult.

Barry: You had to be a swiss guide.

Jean: But, you know what's really interesting to me though, and Bill Byrd and I talked about this a lot, but wasn't it in the fifties and sixties, no in the sixties after this crash. That's really interesting. Because I know they started using the guides — well, there was this secret mission thing, and Outward Bound, some of the guides became Outward Bound Instructors and set up the training programs for the Peace Corps. So I know at some point that changed, and the government became aware of ...

Barry: Oh sure. Of competent American climbers. Because they couldn't grant so many visas to the Swiss. [laughter]

Jean: So it was out of desperation. Because, the other thing that happened from the tenth mountain division was they drew from the climbers. So, I'm surprised that they didn't have you rescue the [inaudible].

Barry: Well, we were too. But at that time, Americans didn't have much credibility in international climbing, either.

Jean: And when do you think that started happening?

Barry: Well, with the '63 Everest expedition.

Jean: See, I think that too. So, to me I think the Exum guides really brought international credibility to American climbing.

Barry: They contributed to it. But still, it still interesting to me that very few of us would ever have been called hot-shot climbers.

Jean: What would you have called yourselves?

Barry: There were better rock climbers in the country. All the time, than any of the Exum guides.

Jean: You mean like Chuck Pratt.

Barry: What do you mean even like. He was a big hit.

Jean: No, I didn't say even like. I said you mean like.

Barry: Oh, yeah, I do. Sure.

Jean: And Yvon. But Yvon did ice clinics for Exum later and some guiding. He pirated guiding.

Barry: Maybe so, but I think he was invited by the school.

Jean: Oh, absolutely. But see, he felt.

Barry: He felt left out.

Jean: Well, everybody has their own version of the portering story, but some people feel that the reason Yvon didn't, that it would have been a natural thing for Yvon to guide after that, too. But he wasn't going to college, and that that was really important to Glenn. And he wasn't the tall handsome guide.

Barry: Yeah. He wasn't as presentable in those early days. He was a late bloomer. I mean, he did and he blossomed beautifully.

Jean: I'll say.

Barry: But, he was a late bloomer.

Jean: Were you aware that Glenn had a certain standard that he was trying to ...

Barry: No. I remember being surprised that a guy like me could get a job. I felt that he had simply overlooked my shortcomings. He did it a lot on the basis of personality. I think his selections worked somewhat that way.

Jean: Personality. Because I've noticed that he tends to like people like my friend Mike Menolascino who is this doctor guy. I mean, all I needed to do was go down to St. George with Mike, and the book deal was fine. He's tall, handsome, educated, athletic, and it seemed to me that there were certain things that both Beth and Glenn saw as achievements, whereas Yvon didn't necessarily fit in.

Barry: Yes. I think they both probably had ideals. Ideal specimens.

Jean: Specimens. Exactly.

Barry: Beth used to compare Pete Lev's legs to Dick Pownalls. Has anyone else ever told you that story?

Jean: No. What was the story?

Barry: Well, they both have very good calves. [laughter]

Jean: And Beth would comment on this?

Barry: Yeah, she said they looked like Dick Pownall's.

Tape One, side B:

Jean: Its interesting to me then, that you do feel that this group of Exum climbers may have brought credibility to American Mountaineering.

Barry: They brought some credibility. And there were certainly many of us, not associated with the school who were doing that.

Jean: Right, you were leading into the point about how you were hot-shot ...

Barry: But somehow. I think the fact that the influence was done without superb technical skills was something else. And whatever that something else was I'm not sure. Being in the right place at the right time. Because that's what you had to do to get hired by Glenn.

Jean: What was the attraction of the Tetons for climbers?

Barry: Oh. Cause there aren't any mountains that look like that anywhere else.

Jean: Did you, um, I mean was it considered good sport rock climbing, or was it considered mountaineering? Because Chuck Pratt considers the approaches there outrageously horrible.

Barry: He's a Yosemite climber though. And uh, California climbers thought that. But then, Royal Robbins came out and he seemed to like it enough that he kept coming back a lot. And Yvon was never scared off by approaches.

Jean: And what about it appealed to you as a climber? The Tetons, over Yosemite or over Colorado.

Barry: To me it was just a geographic jewel. The whole thing, the valley, the lakes the peaks and the ability to climb. And being there the right time in history before everybody else.

Jean: And so you were aware of that. You felt like you had discovered a place that other people hadn't.

Barry: It was an immediate home for me.

Jean: And why did you move away?

Barry: Because I broke my back.

Jean: And you didn't want to be there, or needed to be ...

Barry: Its a tough place to be paralyzed. Lets put it that way.

Jean: Because of access?

Barry: Because of access. There are psychological reasons too of course. You don't really want to be confronted on a daily basis with what you used to do and can't do anymore.

Jean: Right. But also because of access?

Barry: Its a terrible town. Still is. And is gonna change, since these four kids have broken their necks in this last half year.

Jean: Four?

Barry: Yeah. Steve Millward and Garlet Clover and oh, a guy, I just met him briefly. I went to see them all at Craig Hospital. We discuss the four people, and who they are.] Every time someone in Jackson breaks their back or their neck I get about 20 requests for my book Options. And the poor guy gets them all, about half of them autographed.

Jean: So your book is called what?

Barry: Options.

Jean: When did you write that?

Barry: 1980.

Jean: Good for you. Gol, well you've really excelled.

Barry: Well, these are little things.

Jean: [laughing] It seems like a big thing, just about now. I don't think its a little thing. [writing a book.] What do you think about sport climbing?

Barry: I've never seen it in the flesh. I've seen it on film. I think its very cool to watch. Its got a lot of sex appeal and its not much like mountaineering. I admire it. Its as gymnastic as can be. John Gill should be proud. I probably would have had an interest.

Jean: I love it, but I know that some mountaineers feel that it is an insult.

Barry: How else are you going to watch good rock climbing without having to go anywhere?

Jean: Do you think that this group of people you were involved with who were the mountaineers could be the last explorers in some way? Now, climbing is a different thing in my mind, terms of all the safety things that we have.

Barry: Yeah. I mean we were just in the middle of that evolution, we weren't at the beginning of it. Climbing has been evolving for a long long time. We were only the last thirty years of it.

Jean: Do you think you were an important link?

Barry: I don't value my history very much.

Jean: You got to think about this a little bit after I'm gone. Sometimes its true that, sometimes when you are, you are just existing, so its hard to look back at that. I can understand that. To me, its really obvious that that group of climbers was a very significant link.

Barry: Well, I think that you've been paying attention to it and I have not.

Jean: Absolutely.

Barry: What would a less invested observer say, like Chris Jones have to say about it?

Jean: About what?

Barry: About the importance of the Exum Guides back then.

Jean: And who is Chris Jones?

Barry: He wrote a guide book to North America. But he wasn't a Teton Guide. But he wrote about a number of personalities. History of North American Mountaineering, maybe. [goes to look for it] I won't spend very much time on this.

Jean: Well, I can also look up his name if you are sure its Chris Jones. Can you remember which guides he talked about?

Barry: He talks about Jake Breitenbach and about me. And I'm sure about Durrance. Are you aware that there is a Dartmouth Mountaineering book that came out?

Jean: Oh yeah. I think they're wrong. Because I saw in a magazine article, oh god they were really flubbing up. Either Exum Mountain Guides or Mount Rainier are the oldest. And Mount Rainier is sort of flubbing on their dates, so I'm not really sure.

Barry: Rainier could well be older. My dad was guided up Mount Rainier I'll bet by 1920 or so.

Jean: Yeah, I'll bet they are older. But see, they are not so clear on their dates. That's why I'm not clear about it. But then in Climbing magazine, somebody wrote an article about this that was preceding the book. And they made the mistake saying that they were the oldest club.

Barry: I'm sure Harvard wrote it in.

Jean: [laughs] Probably, but anyway, someone wrote in a letter saying, that's not the oldest club. But anyway, they responded by saying pardon us, its the oldest school. And I should have written a letter immediately, but I didn't, but, I couldn't pin Mount Rainier down. Have you read it?

Barry: Mmmn hmm.

Jean: What's it called?

Barry: Ooh, I don't know, but it probably has the word Dartmouth Mountaineering Club somewhere in the title. By Dean somebody. It came

out about a year ago.

Jean: What is the name of that really big book store in Denver?

Barry: Tattered Cover or Barnes Noble. Either one. They are both megastores. They are now chains. Even the Tattered Cover has a second branch.

Jean: Well good, that will be really interesting thing for me to ... those both sound like good books.

Barry: Yeah, there is one really important thing. But I'm sure other people have told you about it. The handshake? No? Glenn had a bonecruncher handshake. He would, I mean it was, its the only insensitive, impolite thing he ever did. He would arggg. And of course you shake hands before you go out even to beginning climbing school. And he shakes hands. Part of the ritual.

Jean: And then nobody could climb afterwards.

Barry: Muffy went out of the tent one morning, and saw Pete Lev and Rod Newcomb practicing handshakes. Getting there first. [pushes hand out as if to shake]

Jean: No.

Barry: Yeah, you should put that in. Every guide will remember that.

Jean: Nobody has ever mentioned that.

Barry: You ask some of the others when you run into them, I think they'll confirm it.

Jean: Have you seen Glenn recently, or talked to him?

Barry: No. I haven't seen Glenn or talked to him in 15 years. I've corresponded with him. I've driven through St. George a couple of times and not stopped. I felt really guilty.

Jean: They live right on the golf course.

Barry: One would know that.

Jean: Of course. Well, that's great. Well, I've covered all my questions.

Barry: I think you've pulled out of me, I tried to think ahead of things I could tell you about Glenn and I think you've got most of it.

Jean: I may also need to call you again as the book develops.

Barry: Well good. I enjoy talking to you about it.

Jean: Its nice to meet you. Where is this sold? [referring to his magazine]

Barry: Subscription. Take that one with you. I have a box full of them. That's our first issue, our start-up issue under the new management. That's why we put the cheesecake on the cover, we were trying to get people's attention.

Jean: I think its great you put the cheesecake on the cover.

Barry: Its drawn a tremendous amount of attention. More than anything else we've done.

Jean: Well, is that good?

Barry: Oh, it is good.

Jean: So she was in Playboy as a disabled person?

Barry: Yes.

Jean: That's interesting. When was that?

Barry: Seven years ago. Seven year itch. [refers to the title of the magazines lead story.]

Jean: And you kayak, right?

Barry: I did. I have bad shoulders now. That was written two years ago. It died when the magazine died.

Jean: The advantage of being the editor. Well wonderful for you. How exciting being the editor. I love this world [magazine world]. And it comes out bi-monthly.

Barry: It does.

[interview ends Jean continues on tape recorder with a few notes to herself.]

Jean: Barry is handsome and dashing. Verbal. Articulate. Bright. He sits in his wheelchair, raises his body up and down periodically. He had completely adjusted to his life and excels. He is positive. A very momentary person. Charming. Funny. He looks so [inaudible] when you see him in his wheelchair. It must have really shaken up his life. Especially for someone like Barry who was tall and dashing.